

Federico Degetau

1862–1914

RESIDENT COMMISSIONER 1901–1905
REPUBLICAN FROM PUERTO RICO

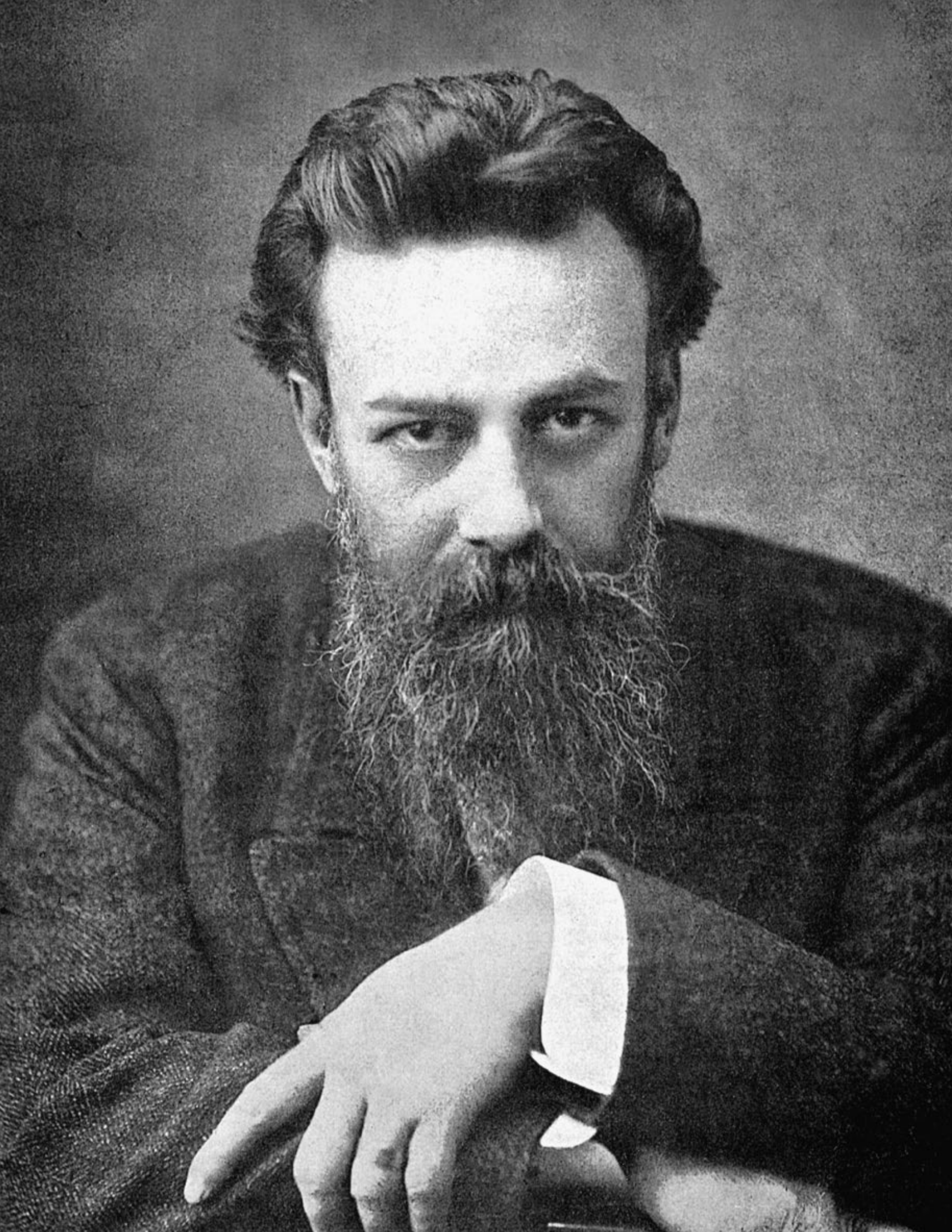
The first Puerto Rican Resident Commissioner in the United States Congress, Federico Degetau had a distinguished résumé as a celebrated legal scholar, novelist, and politician in Puerto Rico and Spain. He was thoroughly grounded in legal theory and political action, and as a student of American jurisprudence, Degetau welcomed the prospect of U.S. rule. But his reaction soured when the new administrators curbed Puerto Rican civil rights and denied them full American citizenship. When House Rules prohibited Degetau from speaking—or even sitting—in the chamber, he lobbied for greater parliamentary privileges and served Puerto Ricans by extralegislative means: speaking to the media, communicating with the executive branch, and representing constituents before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Federico Degetau y González was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, on December 5, 1862. He had no siblings. His mother, María Consolación González y Sánchez Páez, came from a prominent political family in San Juan. His father, Mathías Degetau, was a lawyer from a large German family. When the elder Degetau died in 1863, the family moved from San Juan to Ponce. Degetau's mother relied on relatives to provide for the family, particularly for her son's primary and secondary education. Six years later, the Degetaus returned to San Juan. In 1874 the family moved to Spain and lived in Cádiz and Barcelona. After studying at universities in Granada, Salamanca, and Valladolid, Degetau received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the Universidad de Madrid in 1879. He later studied civil engineering but after a year switched to medicine, and by 1883 had decided to study law. In 1888, Degetau graduated with a doctor of laws degree from the Universidad de Madrid and began publishing articles in a variety of newspapers and journals.

For a brief period, he pursued a career in literature and journalism, writing short novels and articles. His first novel, *¡Qué Quijote!* (1883), was published in an anthology distributed in Puerto Rico and Spain. By 1895, Degetau had published five books ranging from short stories to an autobiography and a study of the pedagogical system of Froebel, a German educator who promoted kindergarten study.¹

Degetau's dual-career track informed his political views. In May 1882 he published his first essay in a Madrid newspaper, *La correspondencia*. In November 1887 Degetau founded the periodical *Isla de Puerto Rico*. Published for only three months, it was dedicated to the overthrow of the Spanish governor, General Romualdo Palacios. Degetau's articles appeared in numerous Puerto Rican publications, enhancing his reputation as a political activist. He returned to Spain in 1896 with a commission of like-minded liberals to negotiate greater autonomy for the island. Degetau remained in Spain to represent Ponce in the Cortes, Spain's parliamentary body. During the Spanish-American War, he traveled to France to celebrate the signing of the Treaty of Paris, and eventually returned to Puerto Rico in November 1898. He married Ana Moreno Elorza y Valeriano, on March 1, 1902, in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The couple adopted Fernando Bonifacio Sánchez and his sister, Plácida.²

With the cession of Puerto Rico to the United States via the Treaty of Paris, Degetau, along with many others, welcomed the new regime. After Degetau returned to the island, U.S. military governor Guy Henry dissolved the cabinet and, on December 6, 1898, established four posts: secretary of state, secretary of justice, secretary of the provincial government, and secretary of the treasury. Degetau was secretary of the provincial government until



his resignation on March 23, 1899. He also served as minister of development, first deputy mayor of San Juan, and director of public instruction.³

In April 1899, Degetau initiated a campaign to organize new political parties on the island, based on his personal conviction that Puerto Ricans deserved U.S. citizenship and autonomy, which were not conferred by the Foraker Act, which had been approved the following year.⁴ Degetau and the Republicans had as a primary goal the “definitive... annexation of Puerto Rico to the United States,” through the “Declaration of Puerto Rico as a territory, as a means of later becoming a state of the Federal Union.”⁵ Degetau extolled the U.S. system of government, based on the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, as a “new political society ... in which individual freedom was safeguarded against all possible aggression of tyranny, in which the old, ruinous theory of ‘paternal governments’ ... was disappearing with the new affirmation of government of the people by the people themselves.”⁶ For Degetau, “these principles, by which order and social wellbeing are founded on the conscience of every people and not on soldiers’ bayonets in the service of a governor, are what we claim for our country,” he said in 1900.⁷

That year, as his party’s nominee for the newly created post of Resident Commissioner to the U.S. Congress, Degetau asked for support “not because of personal merit, but rather because [of] your approval of the principles that I have just described.”⁸ Degetau’s opponent was Federal Party nominee Manuel Gatell, a former postal employee and pharmacist.⁹ Some critics painted Gatell as a puppet of Luis Muñoz Rivera, the Federalist leader. “What responsibility is Mr. Gatell assuming towards the country if he is elected? None,” rejoined a critic. “All his responsibilities would be towards Muñoz Rivera who chose him, and *he* will say what will be required of Gatell as Commissioner.”¹⁰

Degetau criss-crossed the island on a two-week campaign tour, speaking to crowds in both Republican and Federalist strongholds in major cities such as Arecibo, Aguadilla, Mayagüez, and Ponce.¹¹ At the end of the trip, Degetau responded to a series of attacks by Luis Muñoz Rivera’s island-wide newspaper, *La democracia*,

that claimed his stump speeches had been inflammatory: “The people of Puerto Rico are tired of the politics of insults and indecencies that can only establish hatreds and disorder within the country ... upon announcing my modest name, the vast majority of the country has responded, because Federalists and Republicans throughout the Island can attest that in none, in not one, of my speeches or my articles have I offended or insulted Mr. Muñoz or anyone, as *La democracia* claims.”¹² Indeed, Degetau’s popularity as a political dissident in Spain and his activities during the period of military rule in Puerto Rico conferred a large advantage.

Federalists eventually called for an election boycott to protest U.S. officials’ perceived bias toward Republicans, who had not been prosecuted for political violence. As a result, the Republicans swept the elections and gained majority control of the inaugural session of the island’s newly created house of delegates.¹³ Degetau defeated Gatell on November 6, 1900, with an overwhelming majority of the vote (98 percent). Renominated in September 1902, Degetau ran in the general election on November 4 against Federalist Felipe Cuebas Arredondo, earning 46 percent of the vote to his opponent’s 22 percent.¹⁴

When Degetau arrived on the mainland, he participated in a small media tour of New York and Washington, D.C. The press posed many familiar questions: Was Puerto Rico fit to be a territory? Did a majority of islanders prefer statehood or independence? Wasn’t benevolent U.S. rule preferable to the supposed cruelties of life under Spanish governance? Degetau expressed his admiration for the U.S. form of government and responded that most Puerto Ricans wanted a territorial government. “That is, they want t/he same privileges that you accord to the people of Arizona, Indian Territory, Oklahoma, and other Territories,” he noted, characterizing Puerto Ricans dissenting from this viewpoint as lower-class and ignorant of the U.S. system of government.¹⁵ Degetau suggested that by developing its natural resources to improve its infrastructure, educational system, and economy, Puerto Rico could achieve statehood. Describing the Republican approach as gradualist, he distanced himself from the Federalists,

whom he portrayed as impatient and overly zealous in their pursuit of statehood. “My people want to become root and branch Americans [but] we cannot do it too quickly. We recognize that we are naturally Americans, and that our future is part of the future of this country,” he said.¹⁶

With the start of the 57th Congress (1901–1903), Degetau’s status as a Member of Congress became a matter of public speculation. Degetau had no floor privileges, nor was he permitted to hold committee assignments; yet his salary was commensurate with that of other House Members. Indeed, his role in the House resembled that of lobbyists, who sought to persuade Members to vote in a manner they deemed beneficial. One observer noted that Degetau’s primary function seemed to be to “advise and assist committees concerning Porto Rican legislation.” Nevertheless, the media treated Degetau like a celebrity, and Senators and Representatives “cordially welcomed” him. The House Post Office received a “considerable [amount] of mail” before his arrival, and Representative Henry Allen Cooper of Wisconsin, Chairman of the Committee on Insular Affairs, welcomed Degetau and strove to “make him at home in the quarters of that committee.” The Resident Commissioner told his colleagues, “The Porto Rican people ... want to become Americans in the full sense as fast as possible, and they also hope their representative will be accorded the rank of delegate, for as commissioner the island has less representation than it had under Spain.”¹⁷

One of Degetau’s major goals was to put Puerto Rico on the path to statehood. Using a media-savvy strategy to circumvent his inability to speak on the House Floor, he announced his plans to propose a bill to provide Puerto Rico territorial status in preparation for statehood. “All that is required to make Porto Rico one of the most productive countries in the world is the introduction of American capital,” Degetau noted. “Millions of dollars are awaiting investment, but not a cent will be put into the island until the country is provided with suitable and stable laws for its government,” he said.¹⁸ In his second term he also pushed for H.R. 11592, a bill conferring U.S. citizenship on Puerto Ricans, but the bill was referred to the Committee

on Insular Affairs and died there.¹⁹ During debate on an army appropriations bill (H.R. 17473), Degetau noted that colleagues referred to him as the “delegate from Porto Rico.” Gently correcting them, he explained, a “bill giving legal expression to that sentiment—providing for a delegate from Porto Rico—was unanimously recommended by the Committee on Insular Affairs and unanimously approved by the House during the last days of Congress. A similar bill ... is at present on the Calendar, but until now I am, in the language of the law, only a ‘Resident Commissioner.’”²⁰

Though barred by House Rules from serving on committees, Degetau participated in hearings before Chairman Cooper’s Committee on Insular Affairs—a recently formed panel with oversight of civil government and infrastructure in U.S. possessions overseas, including the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico—testifying on H.R. 14083, a bill to grant Puerto Rico a Delegate in place of a Resident Commissioner.²¹ Degetau argued that the Resident Commissioner’s status was muddled. While the Foraker Act provided for the election of an official to represent Puerto Rico, Degetau acknowledged, it was “difficult ... for many people to determine whether the commissioner was elected by the people to represent them or to represent the government of the island, and also whether he represents the island as a part of the American Union or as a distinct political body; in other words, whether he is an official of the local or of the Federal Government.”²²

In June 1902, 18 months after Degetau entered Congress, he finally received floor privileges when Representative Cooper submitted H. Res. 169, amending House Rule 34 to provide Degetau a seat on the House Floor.²³ After a sustained campaign in which numerous Members submitted bills on Degetau’s behalf, he received floor privileges and membership on the Committee on Insular Affairs (without seniority) in February 1904 as a result of H. Res. 158, sponsored by John Dalzell of Pennsylvania.²⁴

Congress lifted the moratorium on Degetau’s participation in floor debate so late in his career that he participated in debate in relatively few instances, although he eloquently defended his countrymen against racial stereotypes late in his final term in the House. During

the debate of an annual army appropriation bill in the Committee of the Whole, James Beauchamp (Champ) Clark of Missouri, a future Speaker of the House, moved an amendment to strike out the appropriation for a provisional army regiment in Puerto Rico.²⁵ In opposing that amendment, Degetau reminded his colleagues that Puerto Rico had avoided a bloody revolution because of its reasoned appeals to the Spanish government. “Without recourse to violence, [Puerto Ricans] accomplished as great reforms as any other people ever accomplished, [and] do not need military force to coerce them into the performance of their present duty,” he noted. Degetau also challenged racist arguments that Puerto Ricans were temperamentally unfit to serve as soldiers. “No, we are not ‘hot-blooded Spaniards,’” he declared. “It is true that the immense majority of us Porto Ricans are of Spanish ancestry.... It is true also that we have long loved American institutions, and through this love we are loyally Americans, who have won our American citizenship.”²⁶ Degetau highlighted the distinguished record of the Puerto Rican regiment’s commanding officers and concluded his speech by emphasizing Puerto Rico’s sense of duty and patriotism. “Every Porto Rican who is aware of the sacredness of this civic duty feels proud of every opportunity that may be offered to him in the military as well as in the civic avenues of life,” Degetau said to prolonged applause, “of maintaining and defending, with the other American citizens, for the welfare and progress of mankind, the same ideal of justice articulated in the Constitution and symbolized in the flag.” Supporting Degetau’s position, Frank Mondell of Wyoming asserted that Puerto Rico should have a regiment for its protection, and Clark’s amendment was defeated, 89 to 47.²⁷

Degetau maintained his status as a practicing attorney and was admitted to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court in April 1901. His admission to the bar was controversial because of his uncertain status as a U.S. citizen, but when Solicitor General John K. Richards introduced him as a member of the Puerto Rican supreme court bar, “there was no objection to his admission and Mr. Degetau walked to the clerk’s office and took the oath of office.”²⁸ Degetau

sought to clarify the ambiguity surrounding Puerto Rican citizenship by participating in legal disputes that would force U.S. officials to specify the status of Puerto Ricans’ citizenship. He interacted with Members of Congress and corresponded with executive branch officials such as the Secretary of State and the President of the United States about matters affecting Puerto Rico, especially the inconsistent policies followed by the Department of the Treasury with regard to Puerto Ricans’ immigration status.²⁹ Degetau also represented Puerto Ricans whose citizenship was in question. He successfully represented Juan Rodríguez, who challenged the Navy Department’s refusal to register him for employment at the Washington Navy Yard because his citizenship was in doubt. The District of Columbia Court of Appeals ruled that Rodríguez was eligible for civil service employment and ordered the navy to reverse its decision.³⁰

Degetau participated in one U.S. Supreme Court case, *Gonzalez v. Williams*, by filing an amicus curiae brief. The case involved Isabel González, an unmarried pregnant woman who emigrated from Puerto Rico to New York City in 1902. Based on her ethnicity, gender, and pregnancy, immigration authorities at Ellis Island deemed her an alien and refused her entry. González challenged the ruling in court, arguing that she was a U.S. citizen. Degetau illustrated the inconsistencies between the Treasury Department’s enforcement of immigration restrictions toward González and its printed regulations. He challenged a circuit court’s decision against González, describing the implied legal assumptions of the transfer of sovereignty (and citizenship) from Spain to the United States resulting from the imposition of military government in 1898, the provisions of the Treaty of Paris, and *Hawaii v. Mankichi*.³¹ Asserting that the “accepted principle in international law [is] that the nationality of a person follows the nationality of the territory in which such person is born,” Degetau argued that the Puerto Rican case was “a clear case of collective naturalization as distinguished from individual naturalization, that happens when a country or province becomes incorporated in another country ... the citizens of Porto Rico forming the

same body politic with the other citizens of the United States and obeying and supporting the same Constitution and ... the same statutory laws that all the other citizens of the United States obey and support.”³² Degetau’s view was that since the cession of Puerto Rico and its people by Spain to the United States released islanders from their political obligations to Spain, and since the islanders took an oath to support the Constitution of the United States, it followed that Puerto Ricans acquired de facto (or territorial) citizenship under Section 7 of the Foraker Act. The court narrowly ruled in González’s favor by declaring that Puerto Ricans were not aliens; however, the Justices did not rule that Puerto Ricans were U.S. citizens.³³

By August 1903, Degetau had split from the Republican Party, an action that contributed to his decision not to run for a third term.³⁴ After his congressional term expired in 1905, Degetau served as chancellor at the Universidad de Puerto Rico and continued his career as a lecturer. He was also an accomplished painter. Degetau died in Santurce, Puerto Rico, on January 20, 1914, and was interred at Cementerio de San Juan (San Juan Cemetery).³⁵

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, “Federico Degetau,” <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

Degetau y González, Federico. *Juventud* (Madrid: A. Avrial, 1894).

_____. *Cuentos* (Madrid: A. Avrial, 1894).

_____. *El ABC del sistema Froebel* (Madrid: J. Perales y Martínez, 1896).

_____. *The Political Status of Porto Rico* (Washington, D.C.: Globe Printing Company, 1902).

Erman, Sam. “Meanings of Citizenship in the U.S. Empire: Puerto Rico, Isabel Gonzalez, and the Supreme Court, 1898 to 1905,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 5–33.

Mergal Llera, Angel M. *Federico Degetau: Un orientador de su pueblo* (New York: Hispanic Institute, 1944).

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

Universidad de Puerto Rico, Centro de Investigaciones Históricas (Rio Piedras, PR). *Papers*: Angel M. Mergal Papers, 1887–1917, approximately 2,300 items. Correspondence, speeches, newspaper

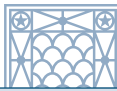
clippings, press releases, testimonials, and other papers relating to the career of Federico Degetau.

NOTES

- 1 “Federico Degetau,” in Federico Rives Tobar, *100 biografías de puertorriqueños ilustres* (New York: Plus Ultra Educational Publishers, Inc., 1973): 213–215; “Nace don Federico Degetau y González en Ponce, Puerto Rico, el 5 de diciembre de 1862. Fueron sus padres doña María Consolación González y Sánchez Páez y don Mathías Degetau. Doña Consuelo pertenecía a una prestigiosa familia de la capital ... Don Matías Degetau perteneció a una numerosa familia hamburguesa ... Por carta que escribió Flavius Dede al Licenciado Federico Martín, el 28 de septiembre de 1863, nos enteramos de la muerte del Sr. Degetau, ocurrida a principios del mes ... La familia González y Sánchez Páez habíase trasladado de la Capital a Ponce ... La inteligente señora mantuvo a través de toda su vida relaciones con los parientes y amigos de su esposo, consagrándose a la educación de su hijo ... Poco más de seis años tenía el niño cuando llegó a San Juan ... Con este acendrado amor por todo lo puertorriqueño, y este profundo respeto por todo lo español, salían doña Consuelo, su hijo ... en las postrimerías del 1874 ... El Havre, luego Burdeos, Lisboa, y finalmente Cadíz, donde Federico se aclimataría a la Península ... La esperanza de hallar en la selecta colonia puertorriqueña de Barcelona ambiente más propicio para la educación de su hijo, le deciden por la Capital de Cataluña ... En 1879 terminaba su bachillerato en Filosofía ... En junio de 1879 ... comienza sus estudios en Ingeniería Civil ... El próximo años le tenemos estudiando medicina ... En enero de 1883 publica en la colección La Biblioteca Pequeñita, su novela *¡Qué Quijote!*, que fué reproducida en periódicos de provincias, incluso Puerto Rico ... En 1887 toma los exámenes en Salamanca, en mayo de 1888 vuelve a Granada, donde se exámenes en Derecho Procesal y Mercantil, finalmente el 30 de junio de 1888 toma sus exámenes en Madrid, y le es extendido el correspondiente Título, por el Ministerio de Fomento, el 29 de octubre de 1888.” Angel M. Mergal, *Federico Degetau: Un orientador de su pueblo* (New York: Hispanic Institute in the United States, 1944): 30–31, 34–36, 39–41, 44–50. Translated as “Mergal Biography Degetau-part 1-ENG,” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 2 “El primer artículo de Madrid, que haya llegado a nuestra noticia, se publicó en *La Correspondencia* ... En 1887 edita, redacta y distribuye el periodico Isla de Puerto Rico, fundado y mantenido exclusivamente para derrocar el gobierno del General Romualdo Palacios, de infeliz memoria en aquella provincia española ... En 1896 vuelve a Puerto Rico. Se le designa para formar parte de una comisión, enviada a Madrid por los partidos liberales de la Isla ... Degetau permanece en España y representa luego a la Isla como Diputado a Cortes por el distrito de Ponce ... en su carácter personal, a las reuniones que en París celebran los plenipotenciarios de España y Estados Unidos para poner fin a la Guerra hispano-

- americana. Regresó a Puerto Rico el 22 de noviembre de 1898 ... El 1 de marzo de 1902 don Federico Degetau y González ... y doña Ana Moreno Elorza y Valarino contraían matrimonio en Council Bluffs, Iowa ... No hubo hijos de este matrimonio. Bonifacio Sánchez y su hermana Plácida, los chicos avileses, fueron adoptados también por doña Ana ... El 22 de noviembre regresa a su isla.” Mergal, *Federico Degetau: Un orientador de su pueblo*: 43–46, 50–51. Translated as “Mergal Biography-Degetau-part 1-ENG,” by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 3 Degetau’s major biographer notes that the structure of the government was intended to ensure the participation of the major political parties but dismissed this as “a useless attempt.” “Bajo la nueva bandera, aún sin ciudadanía determinanda, Degetau desempeña el Ministerio de Fomento en el gobierno temporero del general Henry. Acepta la designación para primer Teniente Alcalde de San Juan ... Asume la Dirección de la Instrucción pública en la ciudad Capital ... El 22 de noviembre regresa a su isla. El 6 de diciembre el gobernador militar Henry disuelve el Gabinete autonómico y establece en su lugar cuatro departamentos: Secretario de Estado ... Secretario de Justicia ... Secretario de Gobernación, don Federico Degetau, Secretario de Hacienda ... A juzgar por la composición de este gobierno, se pensó en satisfacer ambos bandos políticos. Intento inútil. Don Federico renunció el 23 de marzo de 1899.” Mergal, *Federico Degetau: Un orientador de su pueblo*: 50, 165. Translated by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
 - 4 César J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007): 52–53. During this period, Puerto Rican social elites divided into two main parties. Both were committed to the concept of *autonomía*, which stood for individual rights for citizens and a capacity for self-government. The two parties, Partido Federal (Federal Party) and Partido Republicano (Republican Party) advocated different methods to achieve similar goals. The Republican Party used a gradualist approach, refusing to openly condemn U.S. rule, seeking instead to adapt to the system while displaying unconditional loyalty in order to acquire statehood. The Federal Party, on the other hand, offered a vigorous critique of American colonial policies while holding out for statehood. Although the Federalists eventually abandoned the statehood concept, they promoted a policy of gradual reforms, called autonomism, within the existing colonial structure.
 - 5 “Primera. Anexión definitiva y sincera de Puerto Rico a los Estados Unidos. Segunda. Declaración Territorio para Puerto Rico, como medio de ser luego un Estado de la Unión Federal.” Federico Degetau y González. “Al País,” 8 October 1900, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 2. Translated as: “To Our Country,” by Translations International, Inc. (May 2009). This article may have been the first of four manifestos that Degetau published in Puerto Rican newspapers. According to Angel Mergal, Degetau’s major biographer, the other manifestos were published on May 31, 1901, September 12, 1902, and August 31, 1904. See Mergal, *Federico Degetau: Un orientador de su pueblo*: 178–179.
 - 6 “Una nueva sociedad política en que la libertad del individuo estaba garantizada contra toda agresión posible de la tiranía: en que la vieja funesta teoría de los ‘gobiernos paternos’ ... se desvanecía ante la nueva afirmación del gobierno del pueblo por el pueblo mismo.” Federico Degetau y González. “Al País,” 8 October 1900, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 2. Translated as “To Our Country,” by Translations International, Inc. (May 2009).
 - 7 “Esos principios que hacen radicar el orden y bienestar social en la conciencia del pueblo y no en las bayonetas de soldados que sirvan a un gobernante, es lo que reivindicamos para nuestro país.” Federico Degetau y González. “Al País,” 8 October 1900, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 2. Translated as “To Our Country,” by Translations International, Inc. (May 2009).
 - 8 “A reclamar en Washington para nuestro pueblo el derecho a la plenitud de la ciudadanía americana, me ha sido conferido por mi Partido ... Y no por merecimientos personales, sino porque vuestra aprobación a los principios que acabo de exponer, es lo que significa ese voto vuestro dado a mi nombre.” Federico Degetau y González. “Al País,” 8 October 1900, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 2. Translated as “To Our Country,” by Translations International, Inc. (May 2009).
 - 9 “Manuel Gatell: Ex-dependiente de farmacia, ex-empleado subalterno de correos.” Un Imparcial. “Gatell y Degetau: A elegir,” 15 October 1900, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 2. Translated as “Gatell y Degetau: To The Polls,” by Translations International, Inc. (May 2009). For more information about Gatell, see the following anonymous article that lists “XXX” as the author: XXX, “Remitido: Gatell y Degetau,” 16 October 1900, *La correspondencia*: 2.
 - 10 “Qué responsabilidad contrae Gatell ante si el país sale electo? Ninguna. Todas sus responsabilidades serán ante Muñoz que lo elige, y éste dirá cuando a él se le exijan, que Gatell fué el Comisionado.” Un Imparcial, “Remitido”: A XXX y á “El País,” 17 October 1900, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 2. Translated as “Notice: To XXX and to El País,” by Translations International, Inc. (May 2009). For XXX’s response defending Gatell’s qualifications, see XXX, “Remitido: Cuatro palabras, Gatell y Degetau,” 18 October 1900, *La correspondencia*: 2.
 - 11 “Los pueblos de Arecibo, Aguadilla, Mayagüez, Ponce, Juana Daz, y Humacao, serán visitados por este ciudadano dignísimo, de palabra fácil y de una ilustración vasta en todos los problemas que afectan a la futura vida política del país.” “Degetau González,” 11 October 1900, *La correspondencia*: 2. Translated as “Degetau González,” by Translations International, Inc. (May 2009); “Regreso de Degetau,” 30 October 1900, *La correspondencia*: 2. Degetau navigated the island for two weeks, leaving San Juan and visiting cities such as Arecibo in the central-western section, Aguadilla and Mayagüez on Puerto Rico’s west coast, Ponce and Juana Díaz on the southern coast, and Humacao in the southeast corner of the island. Degetau

- visited Gurabo and Caguas, which he describes in Federico Degetau, "Sección neutral," 1 November 1900, *La correspondencia*: 2.
- 12 "Por lo demas mi viaje de propaganda ha dado ocasión al país para demostrar: lo Que el pueblo puertorriqueño está cansado de una política de insultos y de procacidades que sólo puede determinar odios y desórdenes en lo interior ... y al aclamar mi modesto nombre, la inmensa mayoría del país lo ha hecho porque a federales y republicanos de toda la isla les consta que en ninguno, absolutamente en ninguno de mis discursos, ni de mis artículos, he ofendido, ni insultado al Sr. Muñoz ni a nadie, como afirma 'La Democracia'." Federico Degetau, "Sección neutral," 1 November 1900, *La correspondencia* (San Juan, PR): 2.
- 13 Sam Erman, "Meanings of Citizenship in the U.S. Empire: Puerto Rico, Isabel González, and the Supreme Court, 1898 to 1905," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 27 (Summer 2008): 10. See also Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during U.S. Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008): 25–55 for cultural precepts used by Federal Party predecessors in 1898 and 1899, especially *retramiento*.
- 14 *First Annual Report of Charles H. Allen, Governor of Porto Rico, Covering the Period from May 1, 1900, to May 1, 1901*, Senate Document 79, 57th Cong., 1st sess. (1901): 123. Degetau won with 58,937 votes, and Gatell earned only 148 votes; Fernando Bayron Toro, *Elecciones y partidos políticos de Puerto Rico: 1809–2000*. (Mayagüez, PR: Editorial Isla, 2003): 120. Out of a total of 158,924 votes, Degetau's party earned 73,823, while the Federal Party earned 34,605. A third party earned 2,788. For information about Arredondo and Degetau's renomination in the 1902 election, see "Federal Candidates Nominated," 14 September 1902, *San Juan News*: 1; and "Degetau to Run Again for Commissioner," 16 September 1902, *San Juan News*: 1.
- 15 "Porto Ricans Improving," 3 December 1900, *New York Times*: 7.
- 16 "Views of Porto Rico's Delegate," 3 December 1900, *Washington Post*: 1.
- 17 "Porto Rican Commissioner," 15 December 1900, *Washington Post*: 4; "Right to Floor Questioned," 8 December 1900, *Washington Post*: 4. See also William R. Tansill, "The Resident Commissioner to the United States from Puerto Rico: An Historical Perspective," *Revista jurídica de la Universidad de Puerto Rico* 47, nos. 1–2 (1978): 68–106. For biographical information about Cooper, see "Henry Allen Cooper," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.
- 18 "Statehood Their Aim," 25 December 1900, *New York Times*: 11. No bills proposing that Puerto Rico be made a territory were submitted during the 2nd session of the 56th Congress. See *Congressional Record*, Index, House, 56th Cong., 2nd sess.: 222.
- 19 *Congressional Record*, Index, 58th Cong., 2nd sess.: 149–150, 307.
- 20 *Congressional Record*, House, 58th Cong., 3rd sess. (19 January 1905): 1086.
- 21 David T. Canon, Garrison Nelson, and Charles Stewart III, eds., *Committees in the U.S. Congress, 1789–1946*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2002): 617; National Archives and Records Administration, *Guide to the Records of the United States House of Representatives at the National Archives: 1789–1989, Bicentennial ed.*, 100th Cong., 2nd sess., H. Doc. 100–245. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office: 1989): 195–196.
- 22 R. B. Horton, ed., House Committee on Insular Affairs, *Committee Reports, Hearings, and Acts of Congress Corresponding thereto, Committee on Insular Affairs, House of Representatives, 57th Cong.*, 1st and 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903): 34–37. For Degetau's testimony about granting supervisory authority over Puerto Rico's public lands to the Secretary of the Interior, see pp. 426–430.
- 23 Tansill, "The Resident Commissioner to the United States from Puerto Rico": 72–73.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 79–82. See pp. 74–79 for two other unsuccessful attempts to obtain speaking privileges and to change Degetau's status from Resident Commissioner to Delegate, See also "Voice for Porto Rico," 3 February 1904, *Washington Post*: 4; "Delegate from Porto Rico," 3 February 1904, *New York Times*: 6. For floor debate on the approval of speaking privileges for Degetau. See *Congressional Record*, House, 58th Cong., 2nd sess. (2 February 1904): 1523–1529
- 25 Gilberto N. Villahermosa, *Honor and Fidelity: The 65th Infantry in Korea, 1950–1953* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2009): 1–4. The regiment was a unit of two battalions of volunteer infantry authorized by Congress in 1899 and 1900.
- 26 *Congressional Record*, House, 58th Cong., 3rd sess. (19 January 1905): 1088. See pp. 1083–1084 for Clark's statements. The full debate is on pp. 1082–1090.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 1088–1090; "Porto Rican Heard in House," 20 January 1905, *San Francisco Chronicle*: 13.
- 28 "Admission of Mr. Degetau," 1 May 1901, *Washington Post*: 3; United States Department of Justice, Office of the Solicitor General, "John K. Richards," <http://www.justice.gov/osg/aboutosg/osghistpage.php?id=9> (accessed 28 February 2011).
- 29 Erman, "Meaning of Citizenship in the U.S. Empire": 10–11. Erman states that Degetau consistently "lobbied the chairman of the House Committee on Insular Affairs, Henry Allen Cooper, and sent letters to the secretary of state concerning inconsistent treatment of Puerto Rican migrants." Erman describes two instances in which Degetau "intervened in a Puerto Rican man's appeal of a U.S. military commission sentence. And he applied, personally, for a U.S. passport identifying him as a U.S. citizen and for admission to the bar of the U.S. Supreme Court. While these efforts did not produce immediate results, Degetau was personally well received when he made them."



- 30 "Status of a Porto Rican," 20 May 1904, *Washington Post*, 12; "Porto Rican Eligible," 8 March 1905, *Washington Post*: 6; WestlawNext, *U.S. Ex Rel. Rodriguez v. Bowyer* 1905 WL 17637 (App. D.C.), <https://a.next.westlaw.com/> (accessed 24 May 2010).
- 31 Erman, "Meaning of Citizenship in the U.S. Empire": 5; *U.S. Supreme Court Records & Briefs*: 53-I: Part VII; 192 U.S. 1-149 (Reel 633): 21-31 (hereinafter referred to as *U.S. Supreme Court Records & Briefs*).
- 32 *U.S. Supreme Court Records & Briefs*: 35.
- 33 Ibid., 5, 42-43; Erman, "Meaning of Citizenship in the U.S. Empire": 20-23. Erman analyzes Degetau's brief as a statement from "an official, male, and Puerto Rican perspective." According to Erman, Degetau reinterpreted U.S. colonialist precedents with "the contention that Puerto Ricans were not 'natives' in a colonial sense." Erman points out that Puerto Ricans differed from Native Americans and Filipinos in that under Spanish sovereignty, "Puerto Ricans enjoyed such rights as representation in the national legislature, national citizenship accompanied by constitutional protections ... and broad autonomy, continuing that even after U.S. annexation of Puerto Rico, Spain let Puerto Ricans be military officers, embassy officials, and senators." In essence, according to Erman, Degetau argued that Puerto Ricans were "fit" to acquire U.S. citizenship. Erman states that Degetau "portrayed a population actively and naturally blending into the United States against which barriers to citizenship seemed out of place ... Puerto Rican citizenship was territorial citizenship, coexisting with the U.S. citizenship that the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed to all those born within the U.S. nation."
- 34 "En agosto de 1903 vuelve a Puerto Rico. Sus actividades en la política republicana a empezaban a estar en desacuerdo con el partido, y decide no presentar su candidatura para las próximas elecciones." Mergal, *Federico Degetau, Un orientador de pueblo*: 52. Translated as "Mergal Biography Degetau-part 1-ENG," by Translations International, Inc. (June 2010).
- 35 "Federico Degetau Died This Morning," 20 January 1914, *The Times* (San Juan): 1. For obituaries and reminiscences in Spanish, see "Federico Degetau," 20 January 1914, *El tiempo*: 1; "El entierro de Degetau," 21 January 1914, *La correspondencia*: 1; "El entierro de Degetau Gonzalez: Sentida manifestacion," 21 January 1914, *La democracia*: 1; "El entierro de Federico Degetau," 21 January 1914, *El tiempo*: 1; "Federico Degetau: Notas intimas," 22 January 1914, *La democracia*: 1.



“THUS FAR MR. DEGETAU’S
OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS HAVE
BEGUN AND ENDED WITH THIS
DESIGNATION [OF RESIDENT
COMMISSIONER], AND IF HE
SUCCEEDS IN GETTING EVEN SO
FAR AS ACROSS THE THRESHOLD
OF ONE OF THE LOBBIES OF THE
CAPITOL ... HE IS DOING ABOUT
ALL HE CAN REASONABLY
EXPECT TO DO.”

Baltimore Sun, May 17, 1902